



**NOAA Teacher at Sea**  
**Heather Diaz**  
**Onboard NOAA Ship DAVID STARR JORDAN**  
**July 6 – 15, 2006**

**NOAA Teacher at Sea: Heather Diaz**

NOAA Ship DAVID STARR JORDAN

Mission: Juvenile Shark Abundance Survey

Day 8: Thursday, July 13, 2006

**Science and Technology Log**

They did a swordfish set last night around midnight. We hauled in the set around 6am. We caught 4 makos, 9 blues, and 3 pelagic rays. One of the mako sharks that we caught during this set actually was brought up to the side of the ship and tied off with a leader rope. But, while we had him waiting at the back of the boat to be processed, he chewed through the monofilament line and disappeared. Another interesting thing about this set was that at some point during the night, our line was severed. We hauled in most of the line, but our flag was about ½ mile away from where the first part of the line ended. We steamed ahead and caught up with it, then hauled the flag over. João Alves, Lead Fisherman, was able to reattach the line so that we could use it again. We aren't sure why the line was severed, but there were several boats in the area, so one of them may have run it over in the dark.

We did our first shark set around 8am. We hauled in the set around noon. We caught 1 mako shark and 1 blue shark.

We did our second shark set around 2pm. We hauled in the set around 6pm. We caught 3 mako sharks and 8 blue sharks.

I asked permission to go to the Bridge, and there I met up with Commanding Officer (CO) Alexandra Von Sauner as she was beginning her watch. She has been an officer in the NOAA Corps for 14 years,



This is a photo of the DAVID STARR JORDAN, taken from the skiff while at sea. Lieutenant Commander Alexandra Von Sauner explained that the black shapes hanging from the forward mast are called dayshapes, which signal that the ship is "restricted in her ability to maneuver". This means that DSJ has gear in the water, such as when we are setting or hauling the longline, and that we have the right of way over vessels that are not restricted. At night, a series of different colored lights on the mast alerts other boats in much the same way as the dayshapes.

and she has been a captain for the past year. The DAVID STARR JORDAN is the only ship for which she has been Captain. She actually resides in Seattle, but most of the year (sometimes up to 300 days out of 360 days) she spends most of her time at sea and away from the ship's homeport. She said that the things that she loves best about being at sea are being able to see the sights (animals, sunsets, scenery) and the uniqueness of every day, since it is much more interesting than being at a desk all day. She said that the ship's crew is like a family and that they are all very close, especially since they all eat together and spend most of the year together. I have observed while aboard the DSJ that everyone is very friendly and on a first name basis with each other. I have yet to see anyone who was unhappy with their job. Like Lieutenant Commander Von Saunder, everyone I have spoken with says they love being aboard the DAVID STARR JORDAN and that they would rather be here than on land.

While on the bridge, CO Von Saunder also showed me all of the instruments and the charts that they use on the Bridge to run the ship. It was very interesting to see how they can monitor everything from that one room, even how much oil is in the engines! They have a neat computer system that plots where they are and radars that keep track of every other vessel in the area. Lead Electronics Technician Kim Belveal explained to me that even small sailboats show up on their computer, and if they have been registered, their boat registration number and even the boat's name will come up on their computer. That way, if they need to hail the vessel, they can actually call them by name over the radio.

There are also many cameras around the ship, so that safety and security can be monitored at all times. CO Von Saunder also showed me how they steer the ship, and control the speed. She said that the ship will go about 10 knots at its fastest, but that when we are setting or hauling lines, the ship is only going a few knots. She also said that the DAVID STARR JORDAN was launched in 1965, so it is due to be replaced in 2009. She wasn't sure what the name of the new ship would be yet, but I can only hope it will be DAVID STARR JORDAN II. She said that a ship like this would probably be sold once it is retired, and that "She has a lot of life left in her." It is clear that when Lieutenant Commander Von Saunder speaks about her ship and her crew, she is talking about her very own family.

I also had the opportunity to speak with Junior Officer David Gothan. He is fairly new to the NOAA Corps, but he hopes to retire from the NOAA Corps in 20 years. He echoed Lieutenant Commander Von Saunder's reasons for loving his work on the DSJ, as he said that what he enjoys the most about being at sea are seeing all the animals/scenery, meeting different people, and being able to go to different places all the time. I get the impression that all of the NOAA officers on board truly love their job, and they are dedicated to being stewards of our oceans.

### **Personal Log**

I saw many different animals today, including dolphins and a few whales off in the distance. We also saw a few sea lions who were basking in the sun. When they do this, they kind of lie on their back and stick their flippers up out of the water. They are so cute. One of them came quite close to our ship while we were de-baiting the second set,

and people tried to throw him fish. We nicknamed him “Eddie”. He hung around for a while, but got bored and left the area after about 10 minutes.

It was truly a pleasure to speak with Lieutenant Von Saunder, Ensign David Gothan, and Lead Electronics Technician Kim Belveal. And, I am excited to be able to share more of their insights about being a part of the NOAA Corps with my class!